



Department of Planning, Housing, & Community Development

Mayor, Richard C. David

Director, Jennie Skeadas-Sherry, AICP

Meeting Date: February 24, 2015
Staff Report: Commission on Architecture & Urban Design Members
Subject: **20 Hawley Street – Solicitation of Comments**
Tax ID: 160.48-1-16
Case: CAUD 2015- 20 Hawley

A. Review Requested

Staff is soliciting comments from the Commission on Architecture and Urban Design (CAUD) to evaluate the impact of a proposed addition on the property located at 20 Hawley Street, tax map number 160.48-1-16. The building has been evaluated to be “substantially contiguous” to a Local, State and National Historic District, and is in itself a historically and architecturally significant, National Register eligible building. This request for comments has been made on behalf of the department of Planning, Housing, and Community Development (PHCD).

This Staff Report will assess the impact of the properties history, and the historic significance of 20 Hawley Street. Comments from CAUD will be recorded on public record for future reference to the 20 Hawley Street project.

B. Proposal

The applicant Alfred Weissman Real Estate, LLC is seeking to construct two 5-story additions, containing 40 additional units, totaling 180 bedrooms. The proposed project will add an additional 90,000 square feet to the structure. The project has been listed as a Type 1 action by the planning commission due to the proximity of the structure to the Court Street Local, State and National Historic District.

C. **Property History and Condition**

Year of Construction: 1970-1972

Land Use: Residential, located in a C-2 Central Business District Zone (Original use was commercial)

History:

Charles Luckman, Architect of 20 Hawley Street

Charles Luckman was born in Kansas City in 1909 and received his architecture degree from the University of Illinois in 1931. After graduating, Luckman found himself in the early years of the Great Depression. Without any job prospects in architecture because of the dilapidated economy and little growth, Luckman found a job as a draftsman in the advertising department of Colgate-Palmolive-Peet, and would move up quickly to the sales department. Luckman was successful as a businessman and would again move up to a more lucrative sales position at the Pepsodent Company. By 1936 Luckman was the Vice President of Pepsodent at the age of 27, earning him the name of “boy wonder” of the business world and making the front page of *Time Magazine*. In 1941 Luckman would become the President and CEO of Pepsodent, bringing the once struggling company to the top brand of sales in the entire country.

In 1944 Pepsodent was purchased by Lever Brothers, one of the top three soap companies in the industry. As part of the deal Luckman would remain as president and oversee the merger of Lever’s drug department with Pepsodent’s sales organization. In 1946 Luckman would stay with the company, becoming President of Lever Brothers. In 1949, amid rapid growth in company sales Luckman decided to move the headquarters of Lever Brothers from Boston to New York City. He commissioned the world renowned Skidmore, Owning and Merrill to design the office building. Luckman made it apparent that he would also be part of the design process and that his vision would be made clear in the design of the new building. Luckman wanted a sleek simple design, with a lower floor dedicated to the public, free of shops or office space. This was a revolutionary idea that would ultimately revolutionize office buildings, making the Lever House one of the first truly modern American office buildings.

As more opportunities arose in architecture following the end of World War II, Charles Luckman would turn his attention to architecture. He would leave Lever Brothers in 1950 to start an architecture practice of his own. After eight years after building momentum with his new practice, Luckman formed Charles Luckman Associates (CLA) in 1958 at the age of 40. The firm was known early on for their large master planning projects, and design of large government military projects. Luckman described his firm as “The firm of Creative Ideas” arguing that architecture was “a business, not an art”. By 1968 CLA was one of the top five largest architecture firms in the country. Among CLA’s most notable commissions were The Los Angeles Airport (1961), Boston’s Prudential Center (1964), the Los Angeles forum (1967), Madison Square Gardens and Two Penn Plaza, New York (1968), and the Phoenix Civic Center (1972). Luckman’s company also designed both the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas (1961)

and the Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, Florida (1964-1965). Luckman's firm was touted as a group of creative innovators. Luckman stayed active with his firm until his death in 1999.

The Marine Midland Trust Building – 20 Hawley Street

Constructed between 1970 and 1972 the Marine Midland Trust Company Building located at 20 Hawley Street, in Binghamton, New York is a rare example of high-styled, International style architecture from the Urban Renewal era. It's the only building of its kind in the Southern Tier. The building was the key component to Project 1; the first of eight proposed projects to revitalize the City. The Marine Midland Trust building was the keystone and central focus of the Project 1 plan, which proposed replacing 57-acres of "blighted", "slum" neighborhoods in the downtowns southern core with a jet age, and modern mega-complex of interconnected buildings which included a plan for a Government Plaza, a Veterans Memorial Auditorium, parking garages, a hotel, and even housing and comprehensive retail projects in later iterations. The Marine Midland Trust Building was a focal point of commerce and was intended to focus commercial office, and retail space into the downtown primarily to compete with new suburban shopping malls that were popping up in growing succession during this time as a result of federal highway projects and post-war suburban growth.

Starting as early as the late 1940's, City of Binghamton officials began planning for Urban Renewal, believing that a comprehensive renewal program was essential to revitalize parts of the city that were deemed "not functionally adequate, economically efficient or esthetically attractive". This was a national trend reinforced by several housing acts, and the dedication of billions of dollars in federal funds. As a result of this early Urban Renewal Planning, The Valley Development Fund (VDF) was founded in 1959 as a not-for-profit agency aimed at revitalizing what was viewed as the decaying central business district of Downtown Binghamton. The VDF worked closely with the Binghamton Urban Renewal Agency to commission several studies to evaluate the economic viability and real estate marketability of projects proposed under the urban renewal plan. Under Title 1 of the Housing Act of 1954, the City of Binghamton was able to use these studies to acquire state and federal funding for a comprehensive, eight project plan for urban renewal in the City through the newly formed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While only Project 1 was realized, Urban Renewal has had a large impact on the City's downtown. The Government plaza, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, and crown jewel of the plan - The Marine Midland Trust Company Building were the final results of this project, which would create a visually stunning abstract and contemporary landscape to modernize the City.

Charles Luckman's design of the building played a critical creative role in the plaza by crafting views and vistas through "framing" the urban landscape. The 'H' shape of the building allowed for a breathtaking, elevated view of the downtown from One Marine Midland Plaza, and was intended to provide a greeting gateway for motorists entering the City from the State Street ramp. The building would cost \$7.5 Million, and provide 166,870 square feet of modern office space in the downtown. An underground parking garage would provide enough parking for 200 cars, and retail space along the perimeter of the structure provided ample shopping opportunities.

Although initially hailed as a success of Urban Renewal, Project 1 can be described as more ideological than practical and didn't live up to the high expectations that were set for it. Although government plaza has continued its intended use as the head of city, county, and state governments, the overambitious concepts of interconnected mega-structures, grand public plaza's, and elevated street life has slowly evolved into a collection of modern era buildings in the City's downtown. The success of the Marine Midland Trust building was short lived. Fourteen years after its construction, the building was slated for demolition, and was almost razed in August of 1988. When it was ultimately not destroyed, the building sat vacant for several years, and purchased by its current owner in 2008. The building has since been converted into mixed-use retail, and luxury student and market rate housing.

D. Staff Findings

General Findings

While 20 Hawley Street is not listed as a historic structure on local, or state and national registers, it has been evaluated by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a historically significant, and landmark eligible structure. Any proposed additions to the structure should be sensitive to the historic nature of the building, its original intent in regards to view sheds in the downtown, and its role and context in the Binghamton Urban Renewal Plan.

In addition, the building has been deemed "significantly contiguous" to the Court Street Historic District. Any proposed additions to the building should be sensitive to the view-sheds of the building from and to the Court Street Historic District. This includes pedestrian and motorist view sheds from both State and Washington Streets. Any proposed changes to the building should not drastically impact the pedestrian or motorists experience of the historic district in relationship to 20 Hawley Street.

Criteria for Historic Significance Evaluation

Criteria 'A' through 'D' have been developed by the National Park Service to evaluate the areas of significance a building, structure, or property have in terms of history, design, and context. The information provided below regarding 20 Hawley Street (The Marine Midland Trust Building) have been assessed by SHPO in a draft National Register nomination for the building that was never completed or published. These criterion are generally consistent with similar standards for evaluating the local significance of historic properties, outlined in §18-77 of the City of Binghamton code of ordinances.

(A) Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

The Marine Midland Trust Building has strong associations with the Urban Renewal period of American history. The building is part of a much larger project with comprehensive scope that was aimed at renewing the inner city, and downtown of Binghamton from what was identified as "urban blight" and "slums". The federal government funded massive public works project across the

country to modernize cities, and revitalize their failing social and economic constructs. The program is seen largely as a failure, but many cities across the country have remains of these projects in the forms of large scale, modern public plazas, government, commercial, and residential buildings.

The Marine Midland Trust Building was the main anchor of the City of Binghamton's Urban Renewal Plan. In conjunction with the Government Plaza and Veterans Memorial Arena, the building is representative of the Urban Renewal period and mid-century modern architecture and urban design.

(B) Property is associated with the lives of persons significant to our past.

Not applicable.

(C) Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

The Marine Midland Trust Building is a distinctive architectural form and feature of the City's downtown. The building is the only one of its kind in the entire Southern Tier region of New York State. As an International Style building, the structure stands alone in its unique 'H' form, and was an exceptional example of modernism in the International Style of architecture. The building was constructed to act as a gateway to downtown, and preserve the view shed of downtown for pedestrians using One Marine Midland Plaza.

Charles Luckman was a distinguished architect having designed early and influential post-modern buildings. His designs have contributed to bridging the gap between modern and contemporary architecture. Luckman was also a proprietor of the "mega-complex" and "jet age" architecture during the period of Urban Renewal. Luckman and his firm are responsible for several important architectural contributions listed in section 'C' of this staff report. His firm was extremely successful and influenced major themes in architecture over a period of nearly 50 years.

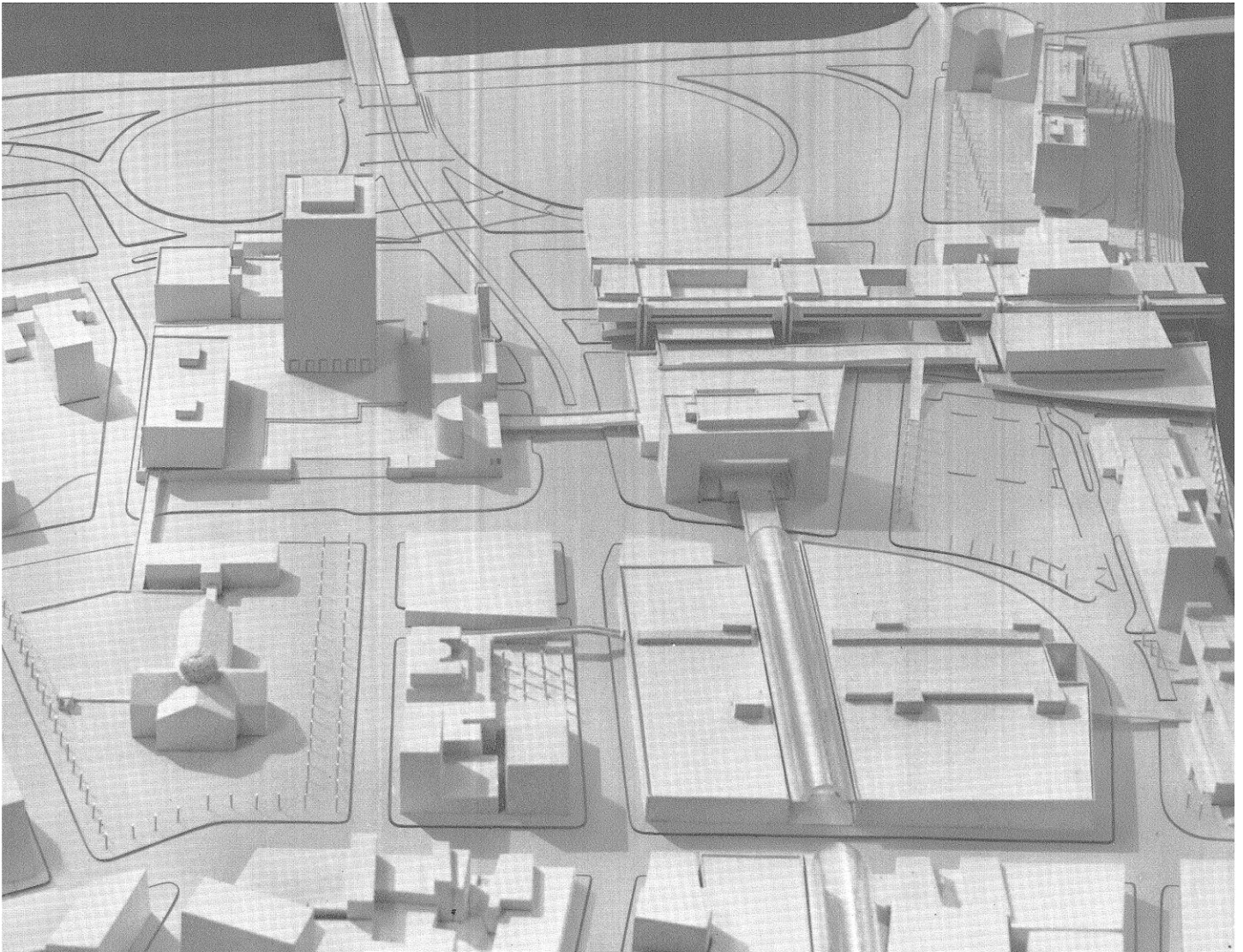
(D) Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

Not applicable

NOTE:

All information regarding Charles Luckman, Urban Renewal, and The Marine Midland Trust Building has been retrieved from an incomplete draft of the National Register Nomination form for 20 Hawley Street. This information is available at the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Some portions of the nomination form are incomplete, and the information presented in this document is unpublished, and is condensed for summary purposes.

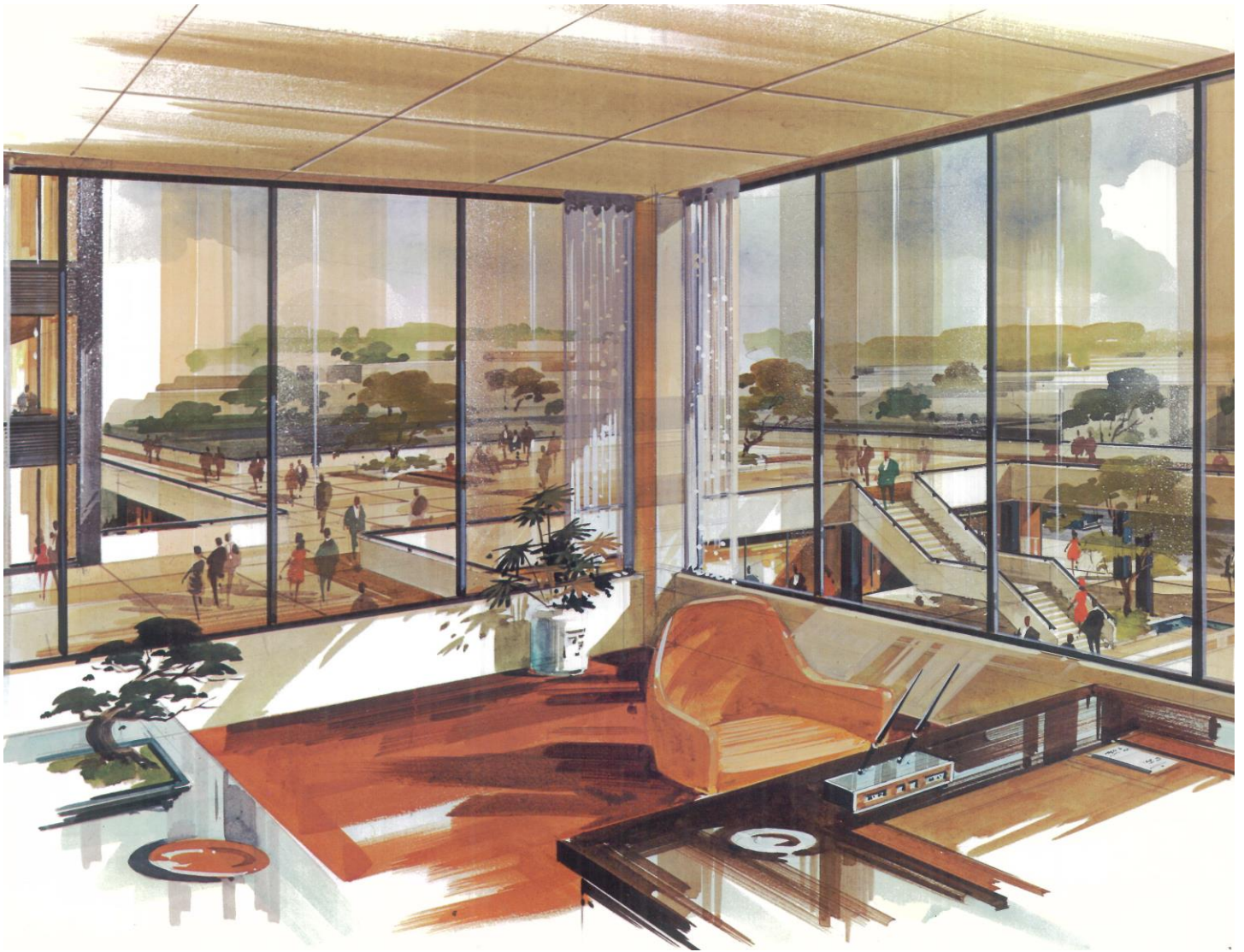
E. Photographs & Site Plans



The Project 1 Plan for Downtown Binghamton, birds-eye view looking south (circa. 1970)



Original artist rendering of The Marine Midland Trust Company Building and Plaza,
View from Hawley Street (circa. 1970)



Original artist rendering of the office interior looking out to the elevated plaza,
View looking southeast (circa. 1970)



View approaching from the State Street Ramp (2015)



View from Washington Street in the Court Street Historic District (2015)



View from State Street in the Court Street Historic District (2015)